

## AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

### Claims 1-12 (Cancelled)

13. (New) A method for characterizing an extrudate flowing under die tooling comprising:

(a) emitting a plurality of laser signals at a plurality of vertically displaced locations from a laser system responsive to detection of the lower edge of an extrudate exiting from a die to emit successive digital signals upon the detection of said lower edge;

(b) applying said digital signals successively from said laser system to a micro controller;

(c) activating a flash by said micro controller;

(d) providing at least one camera with a CCD sensor that is activated by the micro controller and synchronized with the flash;

(e) recording the times of said successive laser signals and digital signals; and

(f) providing a central processor that instantaneously calculates an equation for the combined swell and sag curve of the extrudate and generates separate sag and swell components corresponding to said curve.

14. (New) The method of claim 13 wherein said plurality of laser signals are generated by a laser which is moved vertically as said signals are generated.

15. (New) The method of claim 13 wherein said plurality of laser signals are generated by a plurality of vertically displaced lasers.

16. (New) The method of claim 15 wherein said plurality of laser signals are sequentially generated by successively positioned vertically displaced lasers.

17. (New) The method according to claim 13 wherein the CCD sensor is a two-phase charge-coupled sensor with a transparent electrode.

18. (New) The method according to claim 14 wherein said laser is moved vertically at a speed of no more than 2 m/s.

19. (New) The method according to claim 17 wherein the position of said vertically moving laser is sensed with a tolerance of 1 mm.

20. (New) The method according to claim 13 wherein the duration of said flash is no more than 1/9,100 second.

21. (New) The method according to claim 20 wherein the duration of said flash is within the range of 1/9,100 to 1/28,000 second.

22. (New) The method according to claim 13 further comprising providing feedback software which functions to adjust production parameters of die design, temperature and shear rate.

23. (New) The method according to claim 13 wherein said extrudate is a thermoplastic polymer.

24. (New) The method according to claim 23 wherein the extrudate is selected from the group consisting of polyethylene, polypropylene, polystyrene, polyvinyl chloride, polyamide,

polymethyl methacrylate, polyoxymethylene, acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene, polycarbonate, polyacrylonitrile, styrene-acrylonitrile and ethylene vinyl acetate.

25. (New) The method according to claim 13 wherein said extrudate is selected from the group consisting of polyethylene and polypropylene and mixtures thereof.

26. (New) The method according to claim 13 wherein said extrudate comprises polyethylene.

27. (New) The method according to claim 13 further comprising providing three of said cameras and characterizing the behavior of said extrudate exiting said die in three dimensions.

28. (New) The method according to claim 13 wherein a single camera is employed to characterize the behavior of said extrudate exiting from said die in two dimensions.

29. (New) The method according to claim 13 wherein the onset of melt fracture of said extrudate is detected.

30. (New) The method according to claim 13 further comprising calculating the relaxation time of said extrudate.